



Iowa Medicaid Disease Management Program

www.ime.state.ia.us

1-515-256-4606 (in the Des Moines Area)

1-800-338-8366 (outside of the Des Moines Area)

When to Use the Emergency Department (ED)

An emergency means you could die if you don't get care quickly. Or you could be hurt permanently (disabled). Read below to know when to use—and when **not** to use—an emergency department (also called ED).

Dangers to Your Life

Here are examples of emergencies. These need quick care:

- A hard time breathing
- Severe chest pain
- Choking
- Severe bleeding
- Suddenly not able to move or speak
- Blacking out (fainting)
- Poisoning



Dangers of Permanent Injuries

Here are other emergencies. These also need quick care:

- Deep cuts or severe burns
- An attack by a person or animal
- Broken bones, or sudden severe pain and swelling in a joint

When It's an Emergency

If you have an emergency, follow these steps:

1. Go to the Nearest ED

- If you can, go to the hospital ED closest to you right away.
- If you cannot get there right away, call 911 or your police emergency number.

2. Call Your Primary Care Doctor

- Tell your doctor about the emergency. Call within 24 hours of going to the ED.
- If you cannot call, have someone call for you.
- Go to your doctor (not the ED) for any follow-up care.

When It's NOT an Emergency

If a problem is not an emergency, follow these steps:

1. Call Your Primary Care Doctor

- If you don't know the name of your doctor, call your health plan.
- If you cannot call, have someone call for you.
- Your insurance claim may be denied if you go to the ED when it is an emergency.

2. Follow Instructions

- Your doctor will tell you what you should do.
- You may be told to see your doctor right away. You may be told to go to the ED. Or you may be told to go to an urgent care center.
- Follow your doctor's advice. Then your health plan will pay for the care you receive.